

Peace in Islam in the light of Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad

(Peace be Upon Him)

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Abstract: Religion has occupied an unusual importance in the international affairs in 21st century. It is being debated a lot in the academic circles whether religion is a primary factor in peace or conflict building. Among the religions Islam, which is the fast growing religion throughout the globe, is blamed as a religion of violence and conflict. However, its adherents claim it as a religion of peace, tolerance and brotherhood. In this work we will analyze through the Quran and practices of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) which can eventually give us an idea whether Islam calls for peace or conflict? According to the Muslims, non-Muslims possess biased notions on Islam due to which they interpret the religious texts of Islam without proper context and background. This wrong academic exercise according to the Muslims has distorted the image of Islam in the whole world. The debate of violence and peace has to be analyzed through the scriptures of Islam and the most trust worthy among them is Quran and Prophetic Traditions.

Key Words: Peace; Dialogue; Conflict; Clash

I. Introduction

In the atmosphere of distrust around the world, the mankind could not stand with clash. During world wars humanity witnessed a lot of bloodshed, massacre and distrust. Cold war brought the war of ideologies (Capitalism-Communism) and in Post-cold war world, the consistent use of the terms "Terrorism" and "Extremism" at the political level and the backlash it faced in the name of "War against terror" or "Operation desert fox" or some other operations has put a question mark on the peace process at the global level. The adherents of one ideology are scared of some different ideology. The man of one thought is not in a position to believe the man of different thought. Finally, the man of one faith or a religion gets irritated with a man possessing a different faith. At the end of the day we can say that human beings are becoming "Intolerant". The process of intolerance has been growing in each and every community of human beings. We all know about our intolerance, but unfortunately we could not recognize the faults in one's own community. To blame 'other' community is very easy because we have chosen "other" as our enemy. This is a sad slogan of the new era- "Other is our enemy".

This sort of mental outlook of the people of new era is well expressed by Samuel. P Huntington while interpreting a paragraph of the Michael Dibdin's novel, *Dead Lagoon*, as:

There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not

we cannot love what we are. These are old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century....Those who deny them deny their family, their heritage, their culture, their birthright, and their very selves! They will not lightly be forgiven.¹ Samuel. P. Huntington, (1996).

Are these truths truly reinvented by our statesmen and scholars? Can we identify ourselves only through knowing our enemies? Are enemies essential in this new era of global politics? Does religion helps us to identify "other"? These are some of the important questions discovered in International politics.

For seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential and the potentially most dangerous hatred and animosity can be found within the men possessing different religion, ethnicity, culture or civilisation². People who possess different ideologies and unfortunately share a border have the maximum chances of creating a *Fault Line*. Most of these fault lines are said to exist between Muslims and non-Muslims. Hence the biggest enemies to each other are Muslims and non-Muslims. In this way scholars and academicians who carry such a view point, unite the whole world against Islam. If we put it straight, this is biased study towards the knowledge of a civilisation. There are people who loath upon others religion and civilisation with a vested interest.

II. Islamic Response

There are two different visions of Islam. The first is seeing Islam through its divine source, namely the Quran and the method of this vision is to understand Islam through its own terminology and language. The Arabic language as any other language is a living being whose terminology and words' meaning change depending on the time and place, and also depending on the cults, the school of thought and societies in general. Therefore he, who wants to approach Islam through its divine sources the Quran, needs to understand the Quranic language. Then to proceed without any preconceived ideas to trace the subject under research. It's essential to go through all the verses connecting to the subject being searched. Quranic verses are two kinds: *Mohkamat* or the verses that have the specific meanings, and *Motashabehat* or the verses that has details of the same subject mentioned in the first kind. It's easy to collect all the verses of *Motashabehat* and understand them by its *Mohkamat* verse of the same subject. After such scrutiny one reaches the complete and correct view of Islam without any preconceived ideas. This is the Quranic vision of Islam.

The second vision is seeing Islam throughout Muslim tradition. It's a human source as it has many resources includes the sayings ascribed to the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him) some centuries after his death, the tales invented to comment on the Quranic stories according to their point of views, and the saying of the big Muslim Scholars or the Imams of the Muslim Jurisprudence and the other scholars. By these human resources they look at the Quranic verses, and understand them accordingly.

It's clearly natural to find in these human sources contradicting opinions. Each opinion searches for supporting verses in the Quran by taking these verses out of their context and twisting their meanings according to the terminology of its tradition.

The difference between the two visions:

Since the researcher here is lead astray, it's no wonder that his understanding of Islam contradicts the reality of Islam and it's real vision, it's implicitly out of this second vision of Islam that come the judicial Sentences 'fatwa' which puts Islam in a position that allows it to be accused of terrorism, violence, anomalies and fanaticism.

Thus from this second human traditional vision of Muslims we find diversity of sources and cults, and he who chooses this traditional vision of Muslims in order to understand Islam will find nothing but mixture of Middle aged cultures; some of them full of superstitions (Sufi tradition) or violence (Sunni tradition) and the two kinds (The Shiite tradition). But, if he goes directly to read the

Quran according to its language and understand the Quran by the Quran without any preceding ideas he will be astonished to find that Islam is the religion of peace and forgiveness and all the high values³.

II (A). Peace and Quran

The "root" of the word "Islam" in Arabic is *SALAMA* which is the origin of the words peace or submission, a submission to God and peace to all humanity. It is, thus, no wonder why the salutation in Islam is: *Al-Salamu Alaikum* or Peace on You. According to the Holy Quran [10:25]:

Allah invites (people) to the abode of peace and brings whom he wills to a straight path

Furthermore the revelation of the Qur'an brought with it the angels of peace and the night in which it was revealed became a night of peace. Holy Quran mentions in Surat-al-Qadr (97:1-5):

Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the night of decree is. The night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Ruh (Jibreel) by Allah's Permission with all Decree, Peace! Until the appearance of dawn

The Quran is a book that transcends group mentality, and emphasizes unity and righteousness. Quran says [3:64]:

Say: "O people of the Scripture, let us come to a common understanding between us and between you; that we do not serve except God, and do not set up anything at all with Him, and that none of us takes each other as patrons beside God." If they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that we have submitted."

It is very important for the Muslims to be fair and wise while they argue with the people of different faith. Quran says [29:46]:

And do not argue with the people of the Scripture except in the best manner; except for those who are wicked amongst them, and say: "We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our god and your god is the same; to Him we submit."

This mankind is one Muslims must maintain a good relation with other faiths because they came from the same source. Quran says [49:13]

O mankind, We created you from a male and female, and We made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one

another. Surely, the most honorable among you in the sight of God is the most righteous. God is Knowledgeable, Expert.

The regard for peace, righteousness and justice is to be maintained by the Muslims above all else. Quran says [4:135]:

O believers! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses for the sake of God, even (if this may go) against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin...

Moreover, the concept of Justice and the stress Quran lays on it is remarkable in the annals of history. Quran says [41:34]:

Not equal are the good and the bad response. You shall resort to the one which is better. Thus, the one who used to be your enemy may become your best friend.

God makes us understand the principle of co-existence with other faiths historically. Quran says in Surat-al-Hajj (22: 78):

It is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He (Allah) Who has named you Muslims both before and in this (the Qur'an), that the Messenger be a witness over you and you be a witness over mankind!

The parameters of measuring the tolerance of a religion can be assessed with its relation with other communities or religions. The dynamic concept of brotherhood and tolerance and mutual coexistence is displayed in the following verse of Quran (2; 213):

O mankind! Your Lord is one. So is your father. Know this well that no Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over a Arab. A white man has no superiority over a Negro and a Negro has none over a white man in their merits. Excepting for their faith in God. It certain that in the eyes of God, the most superior of you, is the one who follows the principles of Islam most faithfully.

It is explicable from the verses of the Quran that peace, mutual-coexistence and tolerance is the summon bonum of Islam. This is because anything positive can only be achieved through the atmosphere of peace only. Allah says in the Holy Quran [25:63]:

The (true) servants of (God) the Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, reply with (words of) peace.

One of the verses of the Quran often quoted by the moderate Muslims and by the political leadership is this verse of Surah Ma'idah [5:32]

On that account We ordained for the Children of Isra'il that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole humanity: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the whole humanity. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear (guidance), yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.

We human beings are conditioned in our societies in a way that it is very difficult for us to think positive under the circumstances. De conditioning the human beings by intense training and knowledge of tolerance is the responsibility of all. Most of the human beings think in terms of action and reaction only. Besides that they cannot find any way, as if the world of Islam and teachings of religion end in action and reaction only. Quran says (16:126).

"If you want to retaliate, retaliate to the same degree as the injury done to you. But if you are patient, it is better to be so".

In the moment of crisis when an individual resorts to peace, he gives a great proof of being a human being. This is highness of moral standards which makes him to adopt patience in times of crisis⁴.

Huntington argues that Islam and Christianity are in deadly combat with each other, stormy and each has been 'other's other'⁵. The president of America George Bush supports it when he spoke of getting Osama dead or alive. In line with pushing the imagery back to the past. President Gorge Bush referred 'War against Terror' as a 'crusade'. However, he didn't have in his mind the concept of Holy war while announcing the term crusade. The word crusade is actually as much misunderstood by the Muslims as Jihad in West⁶

The problem is that when an idea gets planted in some one's mind, his whole being starts reflecting that very idea. The religious idea which reflects from the followers of the faith is virtually full of misconceptions and doubts. Followers of religion act against their religion of compassion, mercy, patience, balance and peace; and support the theory of Huntington. David Salbourn quotes in his book Losing Battle within Islam, the Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Bashir who said, "human beings without Islam are like cattle in the eyes of Allah" and a Syrian cleric Shiekh Mahmoud al-Ghassi, in a sermon in 2003 says "atheist dogs" have waged war against Islam in Middle East⁷.

David Salbourn and Huntington both are deadlly accurate if the verses of the Quran are studied out of context. Some of the statements made as in (9:5) of the Quran. 'Fight', it declares- or in other translations 'make war upon'- such of those to whom upon scriptures are revealed as they do not believe in Allah...and who do not acknowledge the truth, until they pay the tribute and are humbled'. This verse would seem to bolster the claim that Islam advocates violence against the Muslims. However, There are a number of verses in the Qur'an that appear to call for Muslims to kill non-Muslims, and these verses have been too often quoted out of context with what appears to be a willful disregard of the context in which they occur. Among these—and perhaps the most often cited—is the infamous “Verse of the Sword” (9:5). There is much more to this story, however. This verse, and the others like it in the Qur'an, has a linguistic, historical, and textual context. Understanding that context is essential in understanding the message of the verse. Careful and unbiased study of these verses, in their proper context, will reveal that the exhortations to fight “idolaters” and “unbelievers” are specific in nature and are not general injunctions for the murder of all those who refuse to accept Islam as their way of life. We must remember the challenging historical circumstances of these Quranic verses. As is known from the Prophet's biography, the Makah oligarchy fought against the Prophet's message from the very beginning. It resorted to violent repression and torture of the Prophet and his followers when they realized that the flow of converts to Islam was increasing. The Prophet himself survived several assassination attempts, and it became so dangerous for the Muslims in Makah that the Prophet sent some of his companions to take asylum in the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. After thirteen years of violence, Muhammad was compelled to take refuge in the city of Medina, and even then the Makkah did not relent in their hostilities. Later, furthermore, various hostile Arab tribes joined in the fight against the Muslims, culminating in the Battle of the Trench, when 10,000 soldiers from many Arab tribes gathered to wipe out the Muslim community once and for all. As we know, the Muslims survived these challenges and eventually went on to establish a vast civilization.

At the time Verse 9:5 was revealed, Makkah had been conquered, the Makkan's themselves had become Muslims, and many of the surrounding pagan Arab tribes had also accepted Islam and sent delegations to the Prophet pledging their allegiance to him. Those who did not become Muslim were the bitterest of enemies, and it was against these remaining hostile forces that the verse commands the Prophet to fight. It was in this violent context that the “Verse of the Sword” was revealed. This verse is part of a long chapter entitled

“Repentance,” and it was revealed nine years after the Prophet immigrated to Medina⁸.

Yet, verse 9:5 must never be quoted out of context. The verses immediately before and after it explain why verse 9:5 exhorts the believers to “kill idolaters wherever you find them.” The first verses state: “There is immunity from God and the messenger of God for those polytheists with whom you have made treaties; So travel the earth for four months, and know that you cannot elude God, and that it is God who brings disgrace upon all who refuse to acknowledge the truth” (9:1-2). The polytheists in these verses are those pagan Arabs who have deliberately broken the treaties they forged with the Prophet. How do we know this? Verse 4 continues: “Except those polytheists with whom you have made a treaty and who have not failed you in anything and have not helped anyone against you; fulfill your treaties with them to the end of their term, for God loves the conscientious.” Had we only quoted only 9:1-2, without the qualifying verse 9:4, it would seem that the Qur'an invalidates all non-aggression treaties made with the non-Muslims so that they can be “slaughtered” according to 9:5. That is clearly not the case. Those who want to malign Islam quote only 9:1-2 and neglect to mention 9:4⁹.

This dimension of the Quran literally seems in ‘Clash’ with other religions. But this clash as I said has a back ground and even their universal approach has signs of wisdom for intellectuals. Quran says:

“Fight those who believe not in Allah, nor forbid that which Allah and His messenger has forbidden, nor follow the religion of Truth, out of those who have been given the book, until they pay the tax in the acknowledgement of their defeat (wa hum saghirun)not in Allah, nor in the last”

Here it appears as if the Quran is declaring a general war against all non-believers until they accept the superiority of Islam and agree to pay *Jiziya*. However, it would be a gross simplification. The intention of Quran is understood from the context and back ground of this revelation. Historians have consensus about the background of this revelation. It was revealed when there was an understanding between the Muslims and Jews that when attacked by the idolaters of Makah, the Jews will fight on the side of Muslims. This is one of the most misinterpreted verses of the Quran. The context and background of the verse if understood properly will clear the confusion that Islam doesn't declare any unintentional war on any religion.

The background and context of the events in Islam is very important to learn. We cannot talk of the peace every time without violence. Sometimes peace is maintained through violence. As the Krishna teaches the Arjun to wage a war and shed blood against his own cousins in

Mahabharata. Arjun mourns that how could he fight his own relatives. The Krishna has to create a situation of war in Arjun because the relations and blood is not as important as Justice on the earth is. Non-violence can be worthless if Justice is denied to people. The Quran says (2:190-193)

'Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress the limits; for Allah loves not transgressors. And kill them wherever you catch them and drive them out from whence they drove you out, for terrorism is worse than killing. But do not engage in combat with them at the sacred mosque unless they engage you in combat there. But if they combat against you, kill them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And combat them on until there is no terrorism or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in Allah. But if they cease, don't let there be hostility except to those who practice oppression'.

N.K Singh explores the concept of peace in Islam as:

Quran sanctions violence only to counter violence. If one studies the history of Arab tribes before Islam and fierce fighting in which they were indulged, one would be convinced that the philosophy of passive resistance would not have worked in that environment. A concept emerges in a particular context and works only in that context says N.K Singh. Non-violence a concept of great value indeed and also upheld by Islam, could not have worked in the prevailing conditions in Arabia¹⁰.

The war in Islam has justification in certain circumstances, especially if inflicted by exploitative and oppressive forces. But war can have no justification for the spread of one's ideology, thought or religion. The Quran sanctions war if the weaker sections of the society are persecuted and there is no way left out to rescue them. Quran says (4:75):

And what reason have you not to fight in the way of Allah and of the weak 'among the men and the women and children, who say your lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from. Thee a friend, and grant us from thee a helper

The need is certainly of rethinking about the interpretation of the Quranic verses. The time demands to explain the unexplainable things and discovering a new meaning with the verification of older facts.

Abdul Karim Saroush, an Iranian pharmacologist and philosopher argued for a rethinking of Islam's relationship with other religions particularly with west. He believed that:

Text alone does not stand alone, it does not carry its own meaning on its shoulders, it needs to be situated in a context, it is theory-laden, its interpretation is in flux, and presuppositions are as actively at work here as elsewhere in the field of understanding. Religious texts are no exception....

Revealed religion in itself may be true and free from the contradictions, but the science of religion is not necessarily so. Religion may be perfect or comprehensive but not so far the science of religion. Religion is divine but its interpretation is thoroughly human and this –worldly. "Evolution and devolution of religious knowledge"¹¹

II (B). Peace and Prophet Muhammad

Prophet is the first man who practices the divine message. He interprets it with the help of God and then preaches people accordingly. Prophet has to do practically everything so that people can believe His message. This is also unanimously agreed that Prophets reform the society. The reformation of the society made by the Prophets' is not only metaphysical. But Prophets reform the society multi dimensionally- social, economic and political dimension. Prophet has to be the best leader while leading the masses. He has to prove it by eradicating the vices, injustice, dishonesty, cruelty and mostly the irreligiousness by preaching virtue, Justice, honesty, kindness and religion among the people. But history witnesses the fact that in a society people differ in temperaments. Some people would agree the message of Prophet readily, some would take time, some would deny and some would react. Prophet manages all of them peacefully but when the wisdom fails one has to resort to rules of Government. No country would absorb terrorism in their respective countries through preaching them the lessons of non-violence. They will react because it is a disease which threatens the mechanism of state interest and lawlessness would prevail. For the sake of Justice State would use all the dangerous weapons to eradicate that kind of evil. Similarly Prophet is a state head who runs the state and his state is whole world and his terrorists would come from any corner of the world. While considering this in mind I think no mind in this world should hesitate with war laws laid down in the Quran.

All the Prophets in the Quran are named as 'Muslim' and the religion preached by them as 'Islam'. Allah says (3:19):

Lo! Religion with Allah (is) the surrender (To His will and guidance). Those who (formerly) received the scripture differed only after knowledge came to them, through transgression among themselves disbelieveth the revelations of Allah (will find that) Lo! Allah is swift at reckoning

The Quran says (3:67):

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was an upright Muslim"

Peace was the basic mission of the philosophy of the Prophet Muhammad's mission. He constantly adhered to the Quran and calling people gently towards the new faith, Islam. Prophet says:

A true Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands bear no violence and a perfect Mujahid is he who has given up those vices which are prohibited by God¹².

Abu Musa narrated once the companions submitted to the Prophet saying, 'O! Prophet of God! Which Islam is superior? The prophet replied: Of the person from whose tongue and hand suffer no violence'¹³.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) said, 'It is better for a leader to make a mistake in forgiving than to make a mistake in punishing'¹⁴.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) said: *'God is kind and likes kindness in all things'¹⁴*. The Prophet Muhammad (s) said: *'Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to people'¹⁵*

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) said: *"He, who makes peace between people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar"¹⁶.*

N.K Singh in his book *Islam- A Religion of Peace* says that The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) is an illustrious model for the Muslims to emulate. He has quoted a number of events from the life Of Prophet Muhammad which shows that His preaching to the mankind was based on fair wisdom and love. For example, he quotes

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following event from His life which occurred in one of the wars:

Once, the Prophet was taking rest under the tree, an enemy soldier locating the prophet alone rushed at him with his drawn sword. When the Prophet got up, the enemy brandished the sword at him, and with authority asked him, 'Who is there to save you know?' The prophet totally unperturbed smiled and said, 'God'. The word God coming out of the Prophets mouth was so powerful that the enemy shivered as under a shock and dropped the sword on the ground. The prophet quickly picked up the sword, and asked the antagonist the same question, 'Who is there to save you know?' The man who was without faith in God, was confused and admitted. There is none except you....Prophet could have easily Chopped off his head. But he handed back the sword to him saying, "Believe in God and have faith in Him"¹⁷.

III. Conclusion

Peace is the essence of Islam and other religions. No religion preaches violence for the sake of injustice nor does religion divide the men. It is either the misinterpretation of religion or vested interest of the followers of religion which has spoiled the religion to the extent that it is blamed as one of the primary factors of conflict in the International Relations. Peace is the primary duty of religion and its adherents must come to the party to show to the world that we are for peace and reconciliation not for violence and destruction. World has witnessed a lot of bloodshed in the name of God. This is the right time when we all together must initiate a new paradigm in social sciences where religion stands for as it is not how it is seen and interpreted.

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